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SUBJECT: CODEL GREGG DISCUSSES MEPP AND COUNTER-EXTREMISM
WITH FOREIGN MINISTER AND INTELLIGENCE CHIEF

Classified By: Ambassador Samuel L. Kaplan for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) Summary: CODEL Gregg held an open and wide-ranging discussion with Foreign Minister Fassi Fihri and Director General for Studies and Documentation (Director of National Intelligence equivalent) Mansouri in a joint meeting on January 5. They focused on making progress on the Israeli-Palestinian issue and combating terrorism. Fassi Fihri emphasized the importance of the U.S. making even small steps on the Israeli-Palestinian peace process to give Palestinians hope for peace. On countering extremism, Fassi Fihri focused on Moroccan-U.S. cooperation and on follow-up to the President's Cairo speech. Mansouri discussed combating "depraved" ideologies through political efforts that would divert potential extremists away from such ideologies by giving them hope for the future. He also stated that Morocco is a true model of tolerant Islam. Fassi Fihri and Mansouri -- despite the differences in their roles within the Moroccan Government -- politely deferred to each other and focused on their respective specialties throughout the discussion. End Summary.

12. (U) During the CODEL's visit to Rabat on January 5, Senators Judd Gregg, Evan Bayh, Arlen Specter, Michael Enzi, John Cornyn, Amy Klobuchar and Ambassador Kaplan met with Foreign Minister Taieb Fassi Fihri and Director General for Studies and Documentation (National Security Advisor equivalent and defacto national security advisor) Mohamed Yassine Mansouri.

Progress on Israeli-Palestinian Conflict Essential

13. (C) Responding to Senators' questions on combating terrorism, bettering the U.S. image in the world, and following up President Obama's Cairo speech, Fassi Fihri repeatedly raised making progress on the Israeli-Palestinian peace process as the key to all those issues. The U.S. must make progress -- even small steps -- toward achieving a Palestinian state to preclude terrorists from using a lack of peace to justify terrorist acts and as a follow-up to the President's Cairo speech. Fassi Fihri explained that progress in this regard would create political goodwill in the Arab and Muslim worlds. He opined that the Secretary's statement in late October that the Israeli settlement freeze was unprecedented resulted in a negative reaction concerning the U.S. position on the Israeli-Palestinian issue in the Arab world. As Commander of the Faithful and Chairman of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, Al-Quds (Jerusalem) Committee, King Mohammed VI considers free access to East Jerusalem indispensable; therefore, stopping Israeli settlement building in the city is a crucial step that the U.S. must work with Israel to achieve. The U.S. ought to endeavor to demonstrate to the Palestinians that living under Abbas is better than under Hamas, Fassi Fihri continued, and

take steps to give people hope for peace. Since Senator Mitchell was appointed, "the U.S. voice on the peace process has been growing quieter," he observed. Without reversing this situation and making progress, terrorists would continue to exploit the situation in the Palestinian territories, he stressed.

Countering Extremism

¶4. (C) In addition to taking steps forward on the Israeli-Palestinian issue, Fassi Fihri listed pushing interfaith dialogue, moving forward on economic development, and countering the perception that the U.S. is anti-Muslim as means of countering extremism. He emphasized cooperation between Morocco and the U.S. in this regard; "people need to see the U.S. and Morocco working together ... civil society to civil society, parliament to parliament, government to government." Important expectations were created by the President's Cairo speech, and the administration must demonstrate that it will do what it has promised, he said.

¶5. (C) In response to a question about how to moderate potential extremists, Mansouri discussed "two extremist ideologies." The first of what he called the "depraved" ideologies was Takfiri doctrine, in which people believe an injustice has been done and the only means of rectifying it is through terrorist acts. The second "depraved" ideology was martyrdom, in which extremists believe that an injustice can only be brought to light through suicide bombing. He posited that the U.S. must fight these ideologies on the political front. "We cannot solve injustices with politics,

but political efforts can give hope for future improvement; we must give youth a positive model for change."

¶6. (C) Turning towards how to combat these ideologies, Mansouri suggested that Morocco could serve as a model of tolerant Islam. Through Morocco's history of Muslims living alongside Jews, Morocco can confront "fallacious ideas" and face "depraved" ideologies such as Wahhabism. Contrary to Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Turkey, which "are not models of tolerant Islam," Morocco is "fortunate" and uniquely-placed to serve as this model.

Comment

¶7. (C) Together, Fassi Fihri and Mansouri are the real co-architects of Morocco's foreign policy, and their thoughtful comments on the MEPP and countering extremism closely reflect the role Morocco seeks to play in the region.

Although their comments regarding U.S. policies -- especially on the MEPP -- may have sounded critical, they were clearly intended to be constructive, and the Moroccans remain among the staunchest supporters of Senator Mitchell's efforts. End Comment.

¶8. (U) CODEL Gregg cleared this message.

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